

KINDERCHAT AS A NEW LITERACY PRACTICE

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Kinderchat, an online community of teachers and education professionals, serves as the subject for my masters' thesis research at Indiana University, Bloomington. Over 20 teachers participate in this web—based chat group, which takes place every Monday night from 9:00 to 10:00 pm, Eastern Standard Time. Participating teachers represent diverse backgrounds and places, an important feature of the group that sets an important dimension of the community. For nine one-hour length sessions from September 25 to November 27, 2017, I observed the group's Twitter activity in relation to each week's preselected topic, which is specified and announced on the Kinderchat website in advance of each meeting. Each chat is managed by a moderator who is an experienced educator as far as I observed. Moderators start the chat by welcoming participants and pose questions about the week's topic and related materials. Prior to each chat, the Kinderchat main page or the moderator of the week tweets a short article pertaining to week's topic, which are generally academic-educational and include areas like curriculum, diversity, and child development. Occasionally, members choose a topic related to calendar events or special dates, like Halloween.

I chose this online community to explore how teachers produce New Literacy Practices which stems from the developments of technology. Specifically, I ask "How do teachers use New Literacy Practices to participate in Kinderchat?" When I began to observe the group in September 25, 2017, I did not fully understand its purpose or the mechanisms it employed to assist educators. Although the research began as an assignment in Dr. Karen Wohlwend's research class, I quickly became intrigued by the group's methods and chose to study it more

deeply as my masters' thesis topic. I kept asking the question: They are tweeting, but then what? I soon learned how to recognize and appreciate the educational issues addressed by this Twitter group. Also, Dr. Wohlwend helped me realize that both my personal experiences as an ex-teacher and my own learning from the Twitter chat group can inform my work as an education researcher.

From my brief personal learning experience, I wanted to explore the effectiveness of Twitter as a teaching tool in larger educational platforms. Many studies approached Twitter as an instructional tool. Teachers, especially in higher education, use Twitter as an immediate feedback tool or as a place that students can engaged with each other on classroom material. While some studies focus on the pre-service teachers and their professional improvement by means of Twitter (Reinhardt et al. 2010) others focus on in-service teachers to see how they integrate Twitter to their own profession or their in-class activities. (Greenhalg et al. 2017) Along with these education-related Twitter studies, there are a few studies that question the effectiveness of Twitter as an instructional tool (Kist et al. 2015). Ultimately, scholars have different ideas about Twitter's role and efficacy in education and I see Kinderchat as a good place to explore as a site for education practices.

From the ideas and insights available in the relevant literature, I tried to look deeply into the Twitter phenomenon. My first positioning was not in the field, but behind the scenes. During my first observations, I assumed that I would see member improvement in a short time. But I quickly realized that learning might not happen that quickly and obviously. I forced myself to look deeply, checking members' profiles, links they shared, and other social media artefacts. As evidence that the users were encountering new and valuable information, one of them tweeted, "This is the first time I saw this topic." This tweet indicated that I need have

much engagement to better understanding. Since I do not have a “subject position” in this field, I merely observed their conversation, and did not interact on Twitter feed. I acknowledge that my assumptions about technological devices and my limited use of Twitter affected me in a negative way at the beginning of the research. However, the more I engaged with both the community and Twitter the more I learned about digital communication and its utility. These observations make me realize an important aspect of my own personality: since I am from a Muslim conservative family, and am slightly older than today’s new generation of teachers, being liked by others does not mean the same thing for me as it does for them. I do not care whether my tweet is retweeted or how many “likes” my photograph gets. Yes, it is nice to be liked, and to receive good comments, but these are not everything to me. My position is totally Eastern, Muslim and personal. And I think that I need to force myself to look and empathize with them. Counting tweets and retweets seems meaningful to me now and I am able to empathize with other people who like social media a lot.

In the third semester of my masters' program, I enrolled in Dr. Wohlwend’s class which focused on writing ethnographic research. The course featured a collaborative research project that was conducted on Kinderchat. We interactively worked on this online teacher community in three separate groups. Each group observed the community on Twitter and shared their respective notes with the class. If we missed the real-time Twitter chat, we reviewed the screen record that was provided in the course materials. Our main focus was on the community of practice while we were observing this group. When we came to the analyzing and coding steps, I began to see that the participants interacted through their own method-a new type of literacy. This idea was bolstered by the course reading of Greenhow and Gleason’s 2012 article that suggests Twitter is itself a kind of literacy practices. The authors called it Twitteracy, which was

very creative to me. I learned from this article that literacy can be defined in a non-traditional way; in fact, it has to be defined in a new way because of the developments in the technology and on the social media. The need for a brand-new definition of literacy was not constrained to the academic perspective. UNESCO published a position paper in 2004 (quite early from the point of this study's time frame) and summarized the 'position' of literacy this way: "Proficiency in communication now involves more than just the ability to read and write, and we need to keep up with the new forms of literacy. Otherwise, we will be illiterate in the very near future."

This initial search about the notion of literacy and its developments caused me to look closely at Twitter. The question in my mind 'If Twitter is a literacy practice, what are the materials of it?' lead me to search the Twitter basics. As it is well known, "Twitter is online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets."

<https://www.lifewire.com/what-exactly-is-twitter-2483331> (retrieved on October 15, 2018).

From this definition, I understand that the notion of "short message" changed in my mind from private messages that we used on our mobile phones to messages that can be published on an online platform. The source adds also that "Another description of Twitter and tweeting might be microblogging." Microblogging is defined in another source as the "...combination of blogging and instant messaging... These short messages can come in the form of a variety of content formats including text, images, video, audio, and hyperlinks." <https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-microblogging-3486200> (retrieved on October 15, 2018). These basic definitions provided preliminary signs to move forward with my examination because my leading questions about Twitter materials concerning new literacy practice had been answered.

I returned to searching for studies about Twitter which are numerous. Among the huge body of literature (most of which was in marketing and business), I tried to eliminate the studies

focused on Twitter and its relationship to education. I realized that studies about Twitter and education focused on the pedagogy of microblogging or on communities of practice, as we did in our course (e.g., Kist et al. 2015, Wright 2010). There were very few studies which handled Twitter as a new literacy practice except the article that was the inspiration of this study (Greenhow and Gleason, 2012).

I decided to study Kinderchat as my master's thesis and began to look closer both Kinderchat and my own Twitter account, which I had only used for a short period of time. During my search for Twitter-related academic articles and the other sources, I realized that Twitter had become one of the ubiquitous items on the TV, in the news, in advertisements, on soap operas, and even in cartoons. I heard the news and read newspaper articles about the function of Twitter on important political events, such as the Arab Spring. Since this news was related to region I am from, I began to think that this little bird can do bigger things than I thought. I was not aware how social media can be powerful in our lives as well as in regional lives.

Although familiarizing myself with Twitter took time, the system's rules drew me to it as a site for studying literacy practices. I was especially drawn to its numerous functions: retweets, mentions, replies, followers, hashtags. It has its own lexicon and some of its terms do not have clear or universal definitions or names. For instance, the symbol @, which was representing only emails communication symbol for me, but it is being used to address a specific person on Twitter. Additionally, it can be used as an abbreviation for "at". I was able to recognize the existence of "@" thanks to emails that I received prior to using Twitter. However, "hashtag" was difficult to understand because it was not created by the founders of Twitter. It was created by the Twitter users – so-called Twitterers. The # icon does not have a universally common name

but instead has many names in different languages, and countries.

(<https://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-1773,00.html>) (Retrieved on November 2, 2017). Although it has many different names, it has one function which is to connect the people who used the same hashtag.

I examined the Kinderchat group both on Twitter and on their main web-page. Because I was inexperienced in online ethnography, I had difficulty understanding what I observed. First, I tried to write, record or screenshot everything that I believed to be important. As my field notes became too complicated, I asked one of my friends to review my notes as an outsider. Since there was a great deal of data, it was hard to understand the material. I picked just one of my notes and gave some introductory information to my friend. She critiqued my notes and liked my double entries which make the material clearer. But she advised me to add one more column to write my future research aspirations about what I observed. While my notes show detailed information about each chat, such as date, name of moderator, and the topic, making clusters about the special language that the members used helped to better understand the tweets.

I took into consideration of my friend's ideas as an outsider because I want to keep the balance between insider and outsider perspective. I recognized that outsiders need to know the connection between the Kinderchat website and the Twitter page. At first glance, it is hard to make the connection between them since the one common thing is their emblem. Because Kinderchat was an educational platform and members were talking about academic articles shared at the beginning of each chat, outsiders might expect many serious debates. However, this is a blended conversation that enables members to talk both informally and formally.

After discussion with my friend I began to question my own fieldnotes in terms of three important points: being surprised, being intrigued and being disturbed. (Sunstein & Chiseri-

Strater, p. 88). When I read my notes attentively, I see that I am amazed by the reality of this virtuality. This sense comes from my background with teachers' break rooms in Turkey. In our education system, generally, teachers' have a big room where they can have conversations or meetings, tea/coffee, and relax during break times. So, Kinderchat looked to me like a virtual teachers' meeting room because teachers/educators are talking about what they want either related to that week's article or to their personal lives. My first impression of Kinderchat was this reality of virtuality. Also, I was amazed when I heard about the longevity of the chat. One of the members, who was one of the founders of the Kinderchat website, tweeted that it has been seven years since the chat began. This fact disproved my hypothesis about the ephemerality of virtual spaces. I thought that virtual spaces are easy to give up and end with short notice.

In this study, Kinderchat, as an online ethnographic field will be examined to see how it serves as a side of new literacy practices. The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction where I stated what led me to begin this study, as well as my own experiences and engagement with the topic. Chapter 2 concerns the academic background of the topic, which is divided into two sections. The first is a Literature Review where I examine articles concerning new literacy practices, Twitter and its relationship to education, and online ethnography. The second section is a Theoretical Framework, which explores the foundations of New Literacy Practice theory that are key to this study. My research questions follow the theory sections of this chapter. Chapter 3 describes my Methodology, explaining how data is collected and handled with details concerning basic qualitative research strategies. Chapter 4 presents the Findings of the study, divided between two sections centered on each of my two research questions. Thus, findings are provided from the points of 'production' and 'participation,' since these key words provide the basis for each of the questions. The last chapter, Chapter 5, is dedicated to discussion

and the study's implications; I discuss gaps within my study and provide ideas about future academic research related to this area.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Understanding New Literacy

This section will review studies of New Literacy, including work that analyzes Twitter as a New Literacy practice. The notion of New Literacy will be explored to look for research that examines Twitter as New Literacy Practice.

Twitteracy: Tweeting as a new literacy practice. Greenhow & Gleason (2012). This study is the most vital part of the literature review for my research because among many microblogging or new literacy practice studies that I read, this is the only one which focuses on Twitter as a new literacy practice. Also because of that, this piece will have a little bit more prominence than others in my literature review. One of the research questions of the study is “Can tweeting be considered a new literacy practice?” which aroused my attention at this point. Although this article was published in 2012, when Twitter was six years old, the authors explained this virtual platform at the very beginning. What is social media, description of microblogging and Twitter, what are the Twitter terms, for instance when the hashtag is used, what retweeting means, etc. After this general information, the authors focused on the reasons why people use twitter. In other words, what are the functions of Twitter? Other words, as the authors stated, “Twitter Demographics” (p. 466).

The authors presented an overall picture of the literature that was published until 2012, the time when the study was conducted. They searched many articles that were published in

various journals to create a reliable base for their study. Before moving on to the theoretical foundations of this study, the authors showed the necessity of the understanding as Twitteracy.

For the theoretical framework, the authors grounded their discussion in New Literacies. “New literacies scholars conceptualize literacy from a broader, sociocultural perspective as a dynamic, situationally specific, multimodal, and socially mediated practice that both shapes and is shaped by digital technologies.” (p. 467).

Another focus of this study is considering tweeting as a new and old literacy practice. In this section of the study, the authors examined 43 articles that were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2007-2012. When it is considered that Twitter was founded in 2006, the scope of the authors’ research was very comprehensive. Although they checked the major journals and keywords, “... published research on Twitter use in education is scant.” (p. 468). It has been six years since this article was published. However, as far as I have searched the body of the literature, Twitter related studies are still limited. On the other hand, in the “Conceptualization of Twitteracy” section of the study where the authors tried to answer the research question, they “... found no conceptual or empirical articles that discussed tweeting from the perspective of new literacy studies...” (p. 470). In my study, I analyzed every tweet from the point of new literacy practice to meet this need. In this section, the findings that were drawn from other social platforms like Facebook, MySpace, etc. concluded that especially young people are practicing literacy on these platforms from the point of the new ethos. Moreover, this process is proceeding in reciprocation. Technology is shaping literacies, while literacies are shaping technology.

Another effectiveness of this study is that the notion of Twitter terms can be defined by their function. Briefly, replies are feedback, mentions are recognition, information distribution is retweet, and organized conversations are hashtags (p. 472). Based on this in my study, I coded

retweets, mentions, and likes as natural and immediate feedback; writing concisely for a specific group of audience as high or low effective conciseness (p.467); and manipulating the text with tools of technology, like emojis, images, gifs, etc., as multimodal design (p. 470). From this point, it can be said that the Greenhow & Gleason study is my mentor text: I used it to understand Twitter with its every function and apply it to my research.

Let's talk 2.0. M. Knobel and D. Wilber (2009). In this article, Knobel & Wilber (2009) introduced and defined the new kind of literacy practice that stemmed from Web 2.0, an improved version of Web 1.0. The primary focus of their study to show that literacy 2.0, or new literacy practices, are natural and inevitable results of technological developments. I use the terms literacy 2.0 and new literacy practices interchangeably because one of the authors is also the author of *New Literacies Everyday Practices and Social Learning*, so it is reasonable to assume that the term literacy 2.0 refers to new literacy practices. Also, Knobel states that one of the mainstays of new literacy practices is “ethos”, referring to values and perspectives, which is used in this study as well. Although the authors only briefly mentioned the “ethos” (p. 21), they imply that new literacies have values and points of view that differ from those of traditional literacies.

The most critical strength point of this article is its explanation of the important functions and practices of the New Literacy Practices. According to the authors three essential practices of this new notion are “... participation, collaboration, and distribution...” (p. 21). Although the study does not focus on any specific online/technologic platform, those three tenets are applicable to Kinderchat on Twitter. In my study, Kinderchat will be analyzed from the perspective of participation, especially that of moderators and newcomers. As one of the other

overarching codes, roles represent the tenets of collaboration and distribution which are embedded in new literacy practices in Kinderchat.

Studying new literacies. Knobel, M. and Lankshear, C. (2014). Knobel and Lankshear, authors of the theoretical book mentioned above, review paradigmatic case studies to reach deeper understanding of the research on the New Literacies. Their clear definition of the concept of new literacies is helpful because there might be confusion among definitions of other technology related studies. They state that "... the idea of "new literacies" focuses on ways in which meaning-making practices are *evolving* under contemporary conditions that include, but are in no way limited to, technological changes associated with the rise and proliferation of digital electronics." (p. 97).

The most important strength point of this study is that it alerts teachers to the embeddedness of new literacies in ongoing technological developments, which means they must become engage in them. The authors argue that knowing about new literacy practices and that they are occurring somewhere in the education/literacy domain is not enough; teachers need to be engaged sufficiently to learn about, use, and teach new literacy practices. (p. 100). The authors' summary of the main tenets of their theory and citation of important research in the field helped me deeply understand not only the definition and significance of new literacy practices but also the importance and necessity of my study.

Another important contribution of this paper is an explanation of notion of "ethos," on which the authors also ground their theory. According to the authors, new literacies are different from conventional literacies on two dimensions: technology and ethos. Put briefly, new literacies are different because they are practiced with technological tools while conventional literacies involve the traditional tools of print media. For example, to create a tweet one needs to use a

keyboard instead of paper and pen. The notion of ethos is basically that of worldview. New literacies are different because they are not just the products of advanced technology; they belong to a different world in which, for instance, the number of likes has vital importance for a person, while it has no meaning for the one who is not familiar with new literacies.

Summary of Understanding New Literacy Practices

In this part of literature review, I have discussed the primary studies that have shaped my understanding of the meaning of the New Literacy Practices and how their practices differ from those of conventional literacies. With these studies and Greenhow and Gleason's (2012) explication of Twitter literacies, I created a road map. While this map helps illuminate the road to the culmination of my study, it also highlights the importance of my study as breaking new ground in research on the new literacy practice function of Twitter.

Twitter as an Educational Tool (or Platform)

This section will review studies of Twitter in educational settings.

Open online spaces of professional learning: context, personalization and facilitation. Evans, P. (2015). Evans explored professional learning through online discussion on Twitter. The research question of this study was not clearly articulated, but the author explained how the facilitation of Twitter events are facilitated by a distributed assemblage of technologies and a collective of event participants.

The most important strong point of this article is its discussion of the hashtag as a facilitator of the conversation on Twitter. Evans stated that hashtags encourage people to participate in a conversation and thus aggregate the Tweets, which enriches the content of the discussion and organizes its structure. (p. 34). In my study, #kinderchat will be evaluated to see

if it works that way. The author also mentioned that the @username function plays a similar role to that of hashtag by provoking the conversation and encouraging participation. (p. 35).

To characterize the online personality of the participants the author uses the term “assemblage,” referring to the combination of human and non-human components of online personas, which, Evans points out, are entangled in the enactment of personas. (p. 32) Although I will not focus on the online personas of the Kinderchat participants, this article helped me consider how the roles of the participants on Kinderchat are intertwined. Furthermore, Evans found out that participants who lacked the opportunity to express themselves on Twitter chat, reflected on ideas stimulated by their Twitter conversations on their personal blogs. This observation suggests how participants mobilize and retranslate their online personalities on different platforms. (p. 34). This finding suggested a perspective from which to examine the personal blogs of Kinderchat participants.

Another important point of this study is that the author created a schema showing the structure of discussion events on Twitter, described by quoting from Sie et al. (2013) as “... an online, open brainstorm-like session or Tweetstorm.” (p. 33). This schema is very similar to Kinderchat’s Monday night conversations. In my study, I will not use this kind of schema, but this study helped to see the big picture, which makes the process easier when the details cloud the vision.

Leading ourselves (Tweets Optional). Kist, Tollafield and Dagistan (2015). In this study, Kist et al. (2015) examine the functions of Twitter and social networking in teachers’ professional development by exploring the contents of tweets. Because the students in the target Multimodal Literacies course expressed negative ideas toward Twitter at the end of the course,

the authors wanted to examine not only the functions of Twitter but also the students' professional teacher development goals in the course.

The most important point of this study is questioning whether Twitter can be used as an instructional tool for a class. After discussing data collection and analysis, the authors concluded with major implications for those who want to use Twitter for this purpose, two of which are that scaffolded rather than dispersed conversation should be used, and professional goals for Twitter should be pre-set encourage engagement as a community (p. 323). This discussion helped me to understand why Kinderchat has pre-set goals that are stated on the main web-page as well as question-answer format for the chats. From this perspective, I am going to look at how these two implications are applied to Kinderchat on Twitter.

A strong point of this study is that the authors conducted content analysis of the tweets. They created the themed clusters like "Education-Related" or "Non-Education-Related" (p. 319). The process of the content analysis provided a good model for my study because classifying the tweets are confusing. Also, the authors discussed the implications of this analysis, some of which are very helpful for my study. For example, they suggest that if Twitter is used as a learning platform, there should be criteria for discussion. (p. 234). Although the authors lacked this provision in their classrooms, Kinderchat has stated their criteria on both the web site and Twitter page. So, this study helped me to understand the features of an online platform which can be used as an educational tool.

All I need to know about Twitter in Education I learned in Kindergarten.

Reinhardt, W., Wheeler, S. and Ebner W. (2010). Reinhardt et al. examined the twitter and microblogging in the educational area by creating an analogy with Robert Fulghum's 1988 book with a similar name, in which he lists the important principles of life that are often quoted or

reproduced in poster form. As an argumentative paper rather than a research report, this article did not have research questions or data. As a strong point, the authors used Twitter related terminology in a way that made them clear to Twitter researchers. For instance, tweeps, twitterers, and tweeple (tweet+people) all refer to the people who use twitter.

Twitter functions to make the social ties stronger by means of chatting. People might not be at the same or similar experience levels in a domain, but they might have many interests in common to share on Twitter chats. This notion brought attention to the relationship between moderators and newcomers. Although participants might be in very different geographical locations, distances do not hinder the development of their relationships.

The analogy with Fulghum's book makes it easy to remember the functions of Twitter in the educational area. For example, the first line of Fulghum's list of fundamental tenets is "share everything," which authors relate to one of the four types of Twitter users from Java et al. (2007), networkers, chatters, reporters, and sharers. (p. 326) which are applicable to the roles taken in Kinderchat conversations. Believing that the use of Twitter as an interaction tool in education is a success story, the authors cite its provision of instant feedback (p. 330) and its function in large classes in which students might feel overlooked or unable to express their ideas. Twitter gives everybody a chance to say something and interactive among the crowd. With regard to my study, Kinderchat has members from many countries including Canada, Peru, and the United States. Without this microblogging opportunity, a teacher from Canada and another one from Peru would probably not have a chance to the exchange of ideas on an educational topic. So, following the example of this study, my study is going to track the interactions among participants.

Summary of Twitter as an Educational Tool

The three articles in this section dealt with Twitter as an educational platform and gave suggestions that were relevant for my study. One such area concerned the functions of hashtags and @username in the conversations, and another the depiction of different sites on the Internet, such as personal blogs and Twitter accounts. The advice to use a question-answer format to scaffold a conversation was applicable to chat formatting. Moreover, the analogy with Fulghum's daily life rules suggested to me that Tweeting actually is a part of many people's lives. This comparison also supports the "teacher meeting room" metaphor that I used at the beginning of this study to understand Kinderchat.

Online Ethnography and NLP

This section will review studies on how researchers conducted their studies on an online platform.

28 Days Later: Twitter Hashtags as "Just in Time" Teacher Professional Development. Greenhalg, S., P, and Koehler, M., J. (2017). Greenhalg and Koehler examined how a Twitter hashtag made "just in time" learning possible for a group of teachers who engaged in a Twitter discussion of the terrorist attack in France. The study focused on how the hashtag they used (#educatettats) created a temporary "affinity space," which gave them an opportunity for professional development by giving them immediate feedback in this chaotic situation, how it the space spread, and how long it lasted. The last two focuses of this study could be measured quantitatively with specific statistical programs. Most salient to my study was the immediate feedback or, in term, just-in-time provision of learning is essential focus from the point of my study. As tweeting, mentioning, or retweeting is interaction on the Twitter platform, getting immediate feedback has importance.

A major importance of this study is that it is the only one that was conducted primarily with public data. All the others in this literature review and many others in the field used their participants as their primary data source and public data (tweets in this case) as a secondary data source. Therefore, the researchers' processing of their data, analysis, and application of their findings to their research questions helped me to understand how to apply online ethnographic methods to my study, which will be conducted with public data only.

Another common point between this study and my study concerns the limitations. Because the authors did not have personal contact with individuals, they were not able to determine variations in how much the participants learned. Although, I will not focus on the learning levels of the participants on Kinderchat, I would like to understand their own perspectives on practicing the new literacies. Another limitation of this study was the issue of unavailable tweets which I will try to solve by using online public archives.

Script towards research 2.0: The influence of digital and online tools in academic research. Grosseck, G. and Bran, R. (2016). In this study, the authors investigated different digital affordances, Web 2.0 tools, and other online resources for the construction of academic writing. Some of the research questions were the following: "Which digital/online tool have we used to assist our students?" and "How do digital tools shape academic research?" Although the authors do not mention where they collected their data and what kind of research methodology they used, it was apparent that the participants were their own college students.

The study examined the use of Web 2.0 tools to improve students' digital literacy and the quality of their research writing. The authors stated that their main goal was to show the importance of the relation between these research tools and empowering students with the digital literacy as a required skill in the 21st century. Similar to the new literacy practices, Web 2.0 tools

accelerate the diffusion of knowledge through participation and collaboration (p. 133), which drew my attention.

The authors provide the examples of several research 2.0 tools, like Padlet, Feedly, and Zotero, and briefly described their functions and provide a schema for research 2.0: *read-> connect-> publish -> write*. (p. 137). Although the tool I use in my study, NVivo, was not mentioned in this paper, this focus on research 2.0 aspect gave me encouragement in my ongoing process.

Another point worth mentioning is that the authors emphasize the challenges of using Web 2.0 tools. Citing Duval et al. (2010), they mention four challenges: the availability of data, sustainable practices, the tools' impact on research results, and the tension between openness or privacy. All of these are challenges I have faced during the process. As an example of the first challenge, Twitter has some limitations with regard to capturing tweets. Although I tried several different computers and Twitter accounts, I was not able to capture tweets after nine weeks. Therefore, along with other points, this study helped me to understand online ethnography and be prepared for the unexpected challenges of the virtual research domain.

Toward an affinity space methodology: Considerations for literacy research.
Lammers, J. C.: Curwood, J., S.: Magnifico, A., M., (2012). Lammers et al. studied on three different affinity spaces, *The Sims*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Neopets*, to deeply understand whether they could offer a new approach toward literacy research. Their research focused on details about the media and the practices of fans in the affinity spaces. Even though the authors did not articulate the fundamental research questions for their study, the question that guided their research can be inferred as “How can the affinity space concept shape our research design, our relationship with participants, and our understanding of literacy practices across portals,

modes, and texts?” The data to answer this general question were drawn from three separate studies of t focal spaces.

The most important strong point of this study is that the authors create a kind of guideline for research by discussing three constraints and three affordances of researching affinity spaces. To be brief here, I discuss just one from each group. One of the affordances of online ethnography is “access to participants outside of our geographic proximity,” which is one of the most important features of online learning spaces. Because the members’ interest governs the participation in an online affinity space, geographical distance is not an obstacle for either the members or the researcher. (p. 51). One of the constraints of online ethnography is “the instability and impermanence of web-based environments and artifacts,” which refers to the main difference between the real life and online research settings. The temporary and unstable nature of online data can profoundly affect the period of opportunity for data collection (p. 53). All the affordances and constraints discussed are applicable to my study. Thus, this study alerted me to points about which I need to be careful as well as the points I can take advantage of.

The authors explained also the nine salient features of affinity spaces, of which three are very important for my study: participation is often multimodal, leadership roles vary within the portal, and socializing plays an important role in affinity space participation. (p. 49-50). Multimodality is one of the features of tweets on Kinderchat, and leadership is invested in the role of “moderator”. Socializing can be interpreted as following the other people or engaging with them during a chat. These are three important methodological points for my study.

Summary of Online Ethnography

Finally, the three articles in the last part of the literature review, informed me of points about which to be vigilant during the application of my methodology. Understanding the

limitations of online ethnography and knowing the appropriate research tools are the prominent areas along with multimodality, leadership (moderating) and socializing features of affinity spaces. All in all, after completing this section of the literature review, I have developed a sense of guidance in conducting online methodology.

Theoretical Frame

The theoretical perspective of this study comes from New Literacies which is grounded by Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel (2011). Lankshear and Knobel's New Literacies is situated in the strand of New Literacy Studies (Street, 1984; Gee 1996) that focus on digital forms of literacy, such as Twitter. The authors examine the historical background of *newness* compared to the 1970s. According to the authors the term *literacies* evolved over five major historical incidents.

At that time, literacy's remolded agenda was prepared to be a place for a radical change in the definition of literacy. In addition to these five historical incidents, James Paul Gee's (1996) study focused on the transformed face of the literacy.

From a sociocultural perspective, it is impossible to separate out from text-mediated social practices the 'bits' concerned with reading or writing (or any other sense of 'literacy') and to treat them independently of all the 'non-print' bits, like values and gestures, context and meaning, actions and objects, talk and interaction, tools and spaces. They are all non-subtractable parts of integrated wholes. 'Literacy bits' do not exist apart from the social practices in which they are embedded and within which in they are acquired. ... Hence, they cannot meaningfully be taught and learned as separate from the rest of the practice. (1996, 13).

Starting with this sociocultural base, Lankshear and Knobel handled the new literacy practices ontologically, which creates the “ethos stuff” in their own terms. (28). For the ontological sense, “the category of ‘new literacies’ refers to practices that are mediated by ‘post-typographic’ forms of texts.” So, this “new” form of literacy uses hyperlinks to build intertextuality, images, sounds in the texts, etc. (28). When this is considered with Gee’s idea which was stated above, social media becomes a new literacy medium that is totally different from traditional literacy media.

To deepen understanding, Knobel and Lankshear (2011) cited Howard Rheingold’s “skill plus community” idea (2009) to underline that using the social media or “mere” participation is not enough to acquire new literacies. “The task for educators is to explore how best to draw upon the pervasive reality of ‘networked publics’ to support educational ends generally, and proficient acquisition of twenty-first-century literacies in particular.” (27).

Among the many scholars who study new literacies, Coiro et al. (2008) examine in detail the definition and the features of new literacies. However, far from defining the “newness,” the authors claim that recognizing the notion “new” and distinguishing new literacies is very hard while we are living with it (6). Because of rapid development and improvement of technology, catching the “new” is almost impossible. Coiro et al. (2008) provide this analogy to define the situation: “new literacies are seen as having a similar kind of life trajectory to motor car models: new in 2006, semi-new in 2007, an old hat by 2008.” (7).

Although Coiro et al. (2008) underline how hard it is to reach a new literacy definition, Lankshear and Knobel claim the “ethos stuff” differentiates the new literacies from traditional ones. “[New Literacies] are often more ‘participatory,’ more ‘collaborative,’ and more ‘distributed’; less ‘published,’ less ‘individuated,’ and less ‘author-centric’ than conventional

literacies.” (29). From this point of view of theorists, new literacies have very different mind-sets and worldviews which have their own values. New literacy products, their media and participation processes are different in nature from traditional products.

Research Questions

Although new literacy theory still has central issues in the domain of research (Coiro et al, 2008), this study will examine Kinderchat as a new literacy practice from the points of ‘production’ and ‘participation.’ The study focuses on these two tenets of new literacy practices for two reasons. First of all, production refers to concrete outcomes of new literacy and reflects the embedded newness of literacy understanding within Kinderchat on Twitter. Secondly, participation is the way people engage in the community on Twitter. The way they use new literacy products to participate in the community will show the combination of community and practice, two important tenets of new literacy practices. Thus, the research questions this study centers around are;

- How do participants produce New Literacy Practices in Kinderchat?
- How do participants use New Literacy Practices to participate in Kinderchat?

Chapter 3 Methodology

Research Design

The primary research questions for this study aim to identify the new literacy products and their functions in Kinderchat on Twitter. Texts, as the products of a certain literacy, which is new literacy in this case, both produce and disseminate the literacy practice. How and for what purpose texts are used are two sub-questions for this study. Because the answers for the research questions can be found in the Kinderchat itself, basic qualitative research design is applied in this study. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the knowledge in the daily life is being

constructed by people and is in an ongoing evolving process, even during this study, from the point of people's meaning-making. Thus, I intend to explore how knowledge about new literacies that takes place in the Kinderchat online community of practice which is suitable for qualitative research design. The tools of qualitative research, particularly memos, observation notes, meta-notes and a codebook, document this social media phenomenon and support analysis to understand deeply the participants of Kinderchat and how they are using the new literacy practices.

Context

Nine weekly Twitter chats were observed. Data collection began on September 25, 2017 and ended on November 25, 2017. The one-hour length Twitter conversations were observed during the chat when it occurs on every Monday night at 9 pm Eastern time. The one-hour chat was divided in three parts. The first 10 minutes of chat were for welcoming and greeting, the last 10 minutes were for wrap up and closing, and the middle 40 minutes were for the discussion about an academic topic. Every week there was a moderator who led the chat during the hour. The moderator usually shared an article and welcomed the people at the beginning of the chat and then posed the questions from the article to provoke discussion.

Participants, Data Sources, Ethics and Validity

Kinderchat as an online teacher community welcomes people who are related to education for every level and age. Participants of the chat vary from aspiring teachers to experienced ones. Although the experience level of the participants is various, there are two explicit roles in the chat. One is moderator while the second one is new comer. I observed that if the chat became off topic, the moderator drew the attention of members to the topic again. Generally, moderators were selected among experienced teachers. Sometimes there were two

moderators as moderator and co-moderator who was helping the other. On the other hand, some of the participants were pre-service teachers who were participating in the chat for their class assignments. Although participants in Kinderchat are generally Canadian or American, the diversity of the ideas, comments, experiences and in-class implementations during the chat is broad because of the cultural diversity of these two countries.

I did not have any personal contact with any of the participants in Kinderchat. This study was conducted with public data: the tweets of participants, the participants' public Twitter accounts, if public, and participants' blogs are the data sources for the study. To protect the participant's personal identity, first initials were used. If participants' tweets were cited, the name and username of the participants were covered on the screenshot. To have valid data for my study, I cross-checked tweet streams on two online achieves, TweetDeck and participate.com, to triangulate. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Methods of Data Collection

Collecting data for this study had 3 steps. The first step was real time observation of chats. After chat ended on Monday nights, tweets were captured by means of NCapture. As second step, I kept meta-notes and secondary source investigation. As the last step of the data collection, captured tweets were converted to Excel spread sheets. The topics and the dates of the chats are shown in the Table 1. On this table, one week is missing in the October when I was transitioned from a collaborative project to my individual project. During this week I was trying to find the best focus for this study.

Weeks	Dates	Moderator	Topic
1	09/25/2017	LD	Inquiry Based/Project Based Learning

2	10/02/2017	CL	Children Literature
3	10/09/2017	MS	Family Rights
4	10/16/2017	CM	Loose Parts (Creativity)
5	10/23/2017	M	Halloween (chit chat)
6	11/06/2017	JS	Play and Curriculum
7	11/13/2017	MN/MK	Mandatory Apologies
8	11/20/2017	LD	Nature and Curriculum
9	11/27/2017	MS	Children Rights

Table 1: Chat dates, moderator initials and topics.

Data Analysis and Coding

I focused on the group dynamics and the conversation atmosphere as well as new literacy practices during the observation. Because the tweet stream was very fast and hard to follow, gaining rapport and understanding the inner culture of the group took priority. After taking field notes during observation, I took digital meta-notes right next to the observation notes. The digital meta-notes included the information I got by following digital texts connected to tweets from the personal Twitter profiles of the members, personal blogs, the web-page of the group (Kinderhcat.org), shared links that directs to other data sources to provide clear understanding.

After observing the chat every Monday night, I organized the tweets as data set by means of NVivo and transcribed each chat into an Excel sheets. After transcribing the data, I coded all tweets by checking from either Twitter or online archives. I used two online archives during the coding process because some of the tweets no longer appeared on the hashtag and the tweets could not be located. TweetDeck.com and participate.com helped retrieve missing tweets. These two online archives both helped me to have an integrated transcript for the study.

After providing an integrated chat transcription, codes were created with analysis of preliminary findings, which lead me to a dilemma at that point. A tweet had two different aspects to code. The first aspect was the content of the tweet which were varied as it can be seen in Table 1. The second aspect was the types of tweets such as like, retweet, mention, reply, etc. which were also varied. In order to solve this dilemma, I consulted the Greenhow & Gleason (2012)'s article to create the codes. After several passes and much revising, I created 3 umbrella or overarching codes, which are Multimodal Design, Online Genres, and Writing Concisely for Audience. Each of the overarching codes has 2 levels of sub-codes that are depicted in the figures. During this coding process, I tried to have comprehensive codes as much as possible.

Under the overarching codes, 2 levels of sub-codes emerged from the data. These two levels of sub-codes have production and participation relationship. For example, the first sub-codes are text features which are characteristic of new literacy practices. The second sub-codes are about how members use these texts.

Overarching Codes and Sub-codes

Multimodal design.

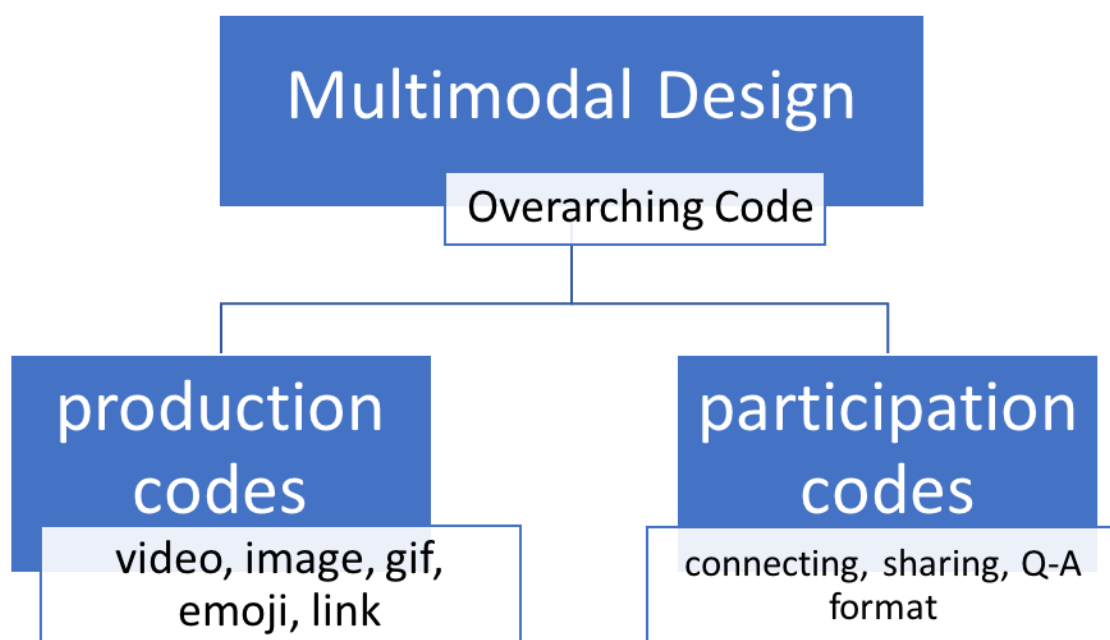


Figure 1: Multimodal Design Codes

The first set of codes are Multimodal Design codes which is important for new literacy practices. Multimodal texts have digital text features such as image(s), video(s), link(s), emoji(s) and gif(s) and hashtag(s). Those elements can be found in many other virtual networks as well as Twitter. However, on Kinderchat, the meaning of these elements gains more importance because by means of these elements Kinderchat members produce new literacy practices. Image(s) are used to provide visual support to the context of tweets. Video(s) are used to share activities in their classrooms. In other words, members use video(s) to share their personal experiences with the students. It is well known that Twitter has a character limit for every tweet. This limitation forces members to express themselves concisely. (September-November Twitter limit change). If a member uses the whole limit (280 characters) in a tweet, it will approximate one page which is very hard and time consuming in a one-hour chat. Hence, members have to be competent on articulating themselves in a concise way. Image(s) and video(s) are very helpful text features on

this purpose because the message that cannot be stated in the 280 characters can be relayed in a short video or an image. When these text features are used in a tweet, there is no need to explain the whole incident that are depicted in the video or image.

Other than those two, emoji(s) and gif(s) are two other multimodal text features that produce new literacy practice on KC. Emoji(s) are in-text small icons that express the feelings of the person while gif(s) are animated images that are used on the same purpose with emoji. The important difference of emoji that separate it from others is that emoji(s) can be found in the virtual keyboard of the message box. (See Figure 4). While emojis are easy to reach and use like that, images and videos need to be attached to the tweet. Hence, the person who want to share an image or video needs to be computer literate which means s/he needs to know how to attach these textual features from her/his personal files in a tweet.

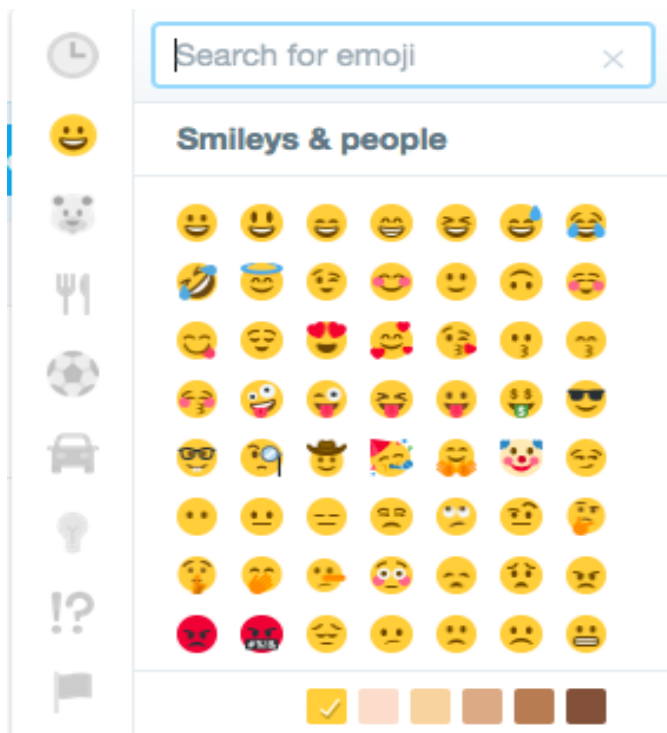


Figure 2. Emoji menu on the message box on Twitter.

Link(s) are the last and the most important text feature for multimodal design of new literacy practices. Links are the hyperlinks that provide access to the other data sources such as personal blogs or websites of the members. Links are the important connection provider for the articles of the week. Every moderator shares the link that directs the reader to that night's short article. They are needed to be embedded in the text of the tweet and generally at the end of the tweet.

All five text features are coded under their names and used for three main purposes which are coded under the second level of sub-codes: sharing, connectivity and Q & A format. Members of Kinderchat used multimodal text features primarily to share their ideas, comments or situations which is very appropriate to be in the microblogging platform. The second purpose was being connected to the wider community while the last one was answering the questions in the chat. As it is stated before, the Kinderchat conversations were constructed in question-answer format. Members answered the questions generally with basic texts, which are tweets in this case, but sometimes they used multimodal text features as well. (examples in the findings).

Online genres.

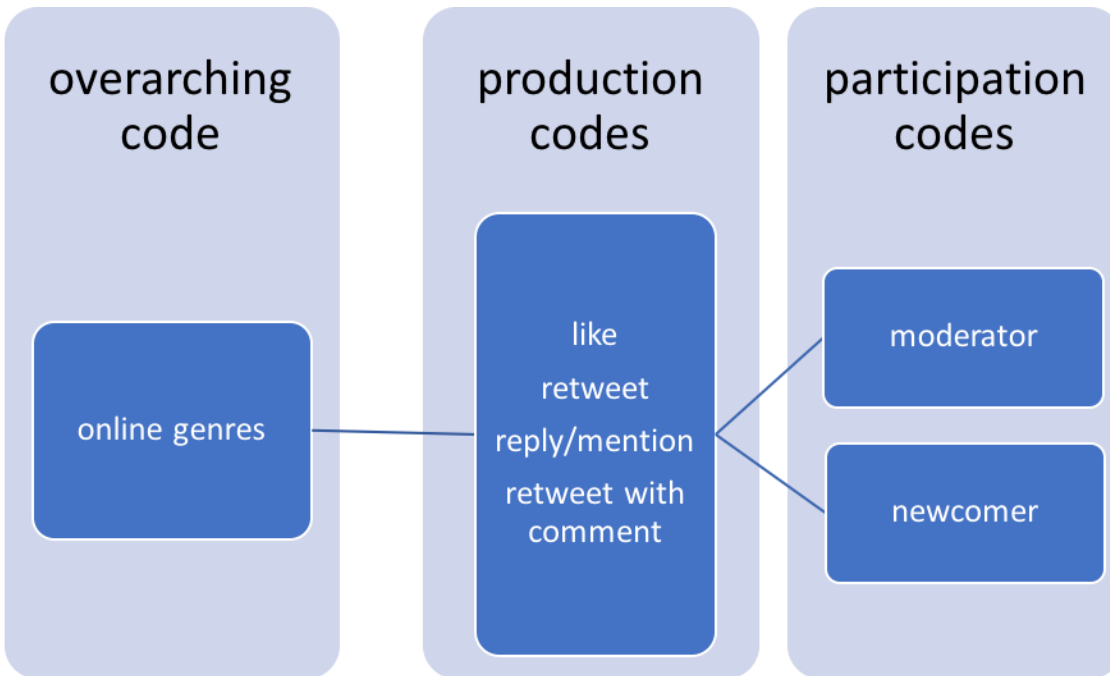


Figure 3: Online Genres codes.

The second set of codes is Online Genres. I named the first version of this set of codes “Online Interaction”. However, in the recoding process I realized that those Twitter activities actually were creating different forms of texts, which together form a ‘genre’. On the other hand, the main understanding of this study is if Twitter is a platform to practice new literacies, then Twitter activities are the way to produce new literacy texts. From this point of view, Twitter basic activities which are the first level of sub-codes are producing new form of texts: like, retweet, mention/reply and retweet with comment.

The second level of sub-codes is created to answers, “Who uses these Twitter genres and for what purpose?” participation questions. In the observation and coding process, it is emerged that these Twitter genres are used differently by the people who are moderators and newcomers. As a matter of fact, the chat has several other roles but since there is no personal contact with the participants in this study, I decided to code the most obvious ones. The parameter for this explicit role coding was participants’ own tweets stating that this is their first chat, or s/he is moderating

this night. Other roles are not coded in the study since I cannot provide reliable information about them.

- Like: basically, agreeing with the content of tweet or simply liking what others said. So, if a tweet gets many likes, it means that the content of it agreeable to others.
- Mention/reply: This Twitter activity is used to address a specific person in the tweet. To do this, the author needs to use @username of the person to mention him/her. As it is said before, if we imagine Kinderchat as a conversation of traditional meeting, mention/reply is having a smaller conversation in a crowded meeting room. So, this online genre is much more specific and person or small group related.
- Retweet: This activity is being more than agree with the author of tweet. When a member likes or thinks that it is beneficial to be known another person's tweet, s/he retweets that tweet.
- Retweet with comment: As obvious, retweeting someone's tweet with a comment that can change the meaning of the tweet. So, retweet definitions are applicable here as well. Besides the retweet function, the added comments can make the tweet a different function and genre. Details about this one will be given in the findings section.

These four online genres are used according to the purpose of participants. As the second level of sub-codes moderators and newcomers are emerged. Moderators is the person who lead the chat basically while newcomers are the people who are saying that this is their first chat. A newcomer can be inexperienced or pre-service teacher in the teaching domain but experienced

on Twitter. Or it can be experienced teacher in the teaching domain but inexperienced chatter on Twitter.

Writing concisely for audience.

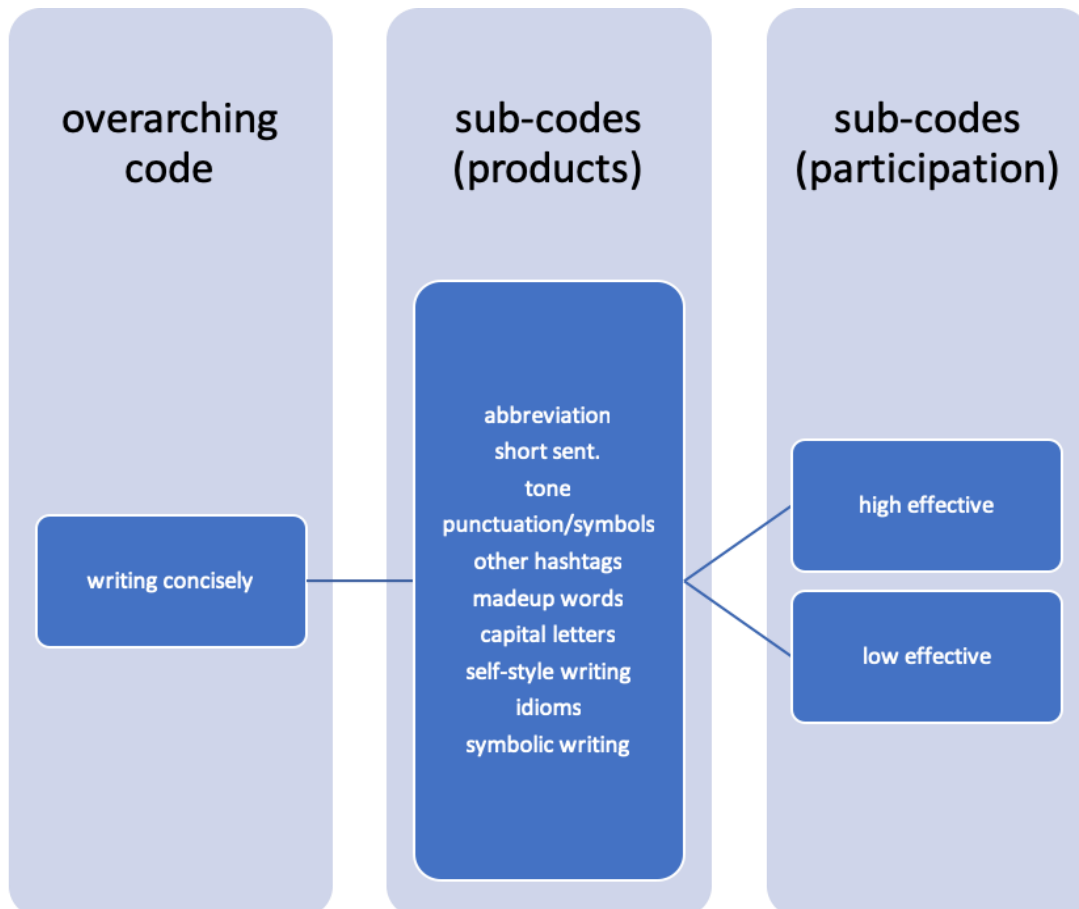


Figure 4: Writing Concisely for Audience codes.

The third set of codes are created by the combination of pre-set and emergent coding aspects. When I consulted Greenhow & Gleason (2012)'s article for the codes, I understood the importance of addressing a specific audience in the virtual platforms. As a second step, it emerged that Kinderchat members created their tweets in a concise way. It seemed very convenient in the case of Twitter because Twitter has character limitations. So, I asked the data "How do the members create concise tweets?" sub-question. As a response, there are 10

elements that emerged from the data at the first level of sub-codes. Short definitions of these 10 elements are provided below.

- 1) Abbreviation: As obvious from its name this code is using abbreviations, generally common ones in tweets.
- 2) Short sentence: It is not using a part of the sentence which do not restrain the general meaning of tweet.
- 3) Tone: This code means that using a friendly or humorous tone in the statements. It totally depends on the topic and sub-topics that are ramified during the conversation.
- 4) Punctuation: Using punctuation marks to reflect some of the meanings. Sometimes some common symbols accompany this code.
- 5) Other hashtag(s): Using other group or personal hashtags in the tweet. Depending on the conversation flow, hashtag(s) is uses to bring something to related data sources. This can be another education-related Twitter group as well as it can be a person's username who has a huge effect in the domain such as a theorist. In both ways, it provides the short-cut meaning instead of saying everything with words.
- 6) Made up word(s): This is the most important code to locate the new literacy practices in the conversation. These words, although there is not many, are created by the participants of Kinderchat. These words do not have any meaning in the dictionary but has meaning in the chat. To understand these words, familiarity of the group and the topic or sub-topic of the conversation is needed. Examples will be provided in the findings section.

- 7) Capital Letter(s): Generally capital letters are used to stress the part of the sentences in tweets. However, it can be used with abbreviations as needed.
- 8) Self-style Writing: This writing style that are designated with specific participants. Generally, this one is seen in the experienced participants' tweet since they developed a self- style in time.
- 9) Idiom(s): Idioms are the easy way to provide neat understanding. Since they have cultural background in the society, understanding them requires the familiarity the culture as well as familiarity of the chat. This one is also found in experienced participants' tweets.
- 10) Symbolic Writing: Symbolic writing is using short-cut items, hashtag or username, as a part of a sentence. Rather than using these items at the end of beginning of a tweet, using them as an object or subject in a sentence reflects that the participant who uses symbolic writing steps up the further phase of new literacy practice.

To understand the degree and impact of writing concisely, I categorized the tweets according the number of elements that they have. This categorization emerged from the need to create the second level of codes. So, the relationship between first and second level of sub-codes is categorization. At this point, “effectiveness” needs to be stated clearly. Effectiveness is the answer of “How many elements are used to create that tweet?” sub-question. So, it depends on the number of the elements in a tweet. However, being low effective is not a failure. Effectiveness is also related to creating tweets that are appropriate to the situation and topic. For instance, when a person introduces him/herself there is no need to be concise. It can be said in one sentence. Short definitions of these 10 elements are provided below.

Chapter 4 Findings

Through careful observation and close analysis of tweets, Kinderchat served as a new literacy practice platform to answer research questions for this study. I grouped these findings under the research questions.

Research Question 1: How do participants produce New Literacy Practices in Kinderchat?

The preliminary answer to this question was that digital literacy practice was used in the group. However, digital literacy here is not knowing how to use a computer in-depth but rather how to manage a Twitter account and how to participate in a Twitter chat. In the case of Kinderchat, this is a basic knowledge that needs to be acquired by the members who are either an experienced teacher or education related person. I observed that some of the experienced members have personal blogs as well. They are producing weekly broadcasts about kindergarten education for their followers. Their personal blogs have the connection to their Twitter account as well as other social media accounts. Thus, experienced members are more digitally skilled than others because managing a blog requires a high-level competency on this kind of literacy.

Another important finding at this point is that the broadcasts on the blogs. It is observed that teachers as bloggers are distributing long articles which contain also multimodal items. Those articles cannot be shared on Twitter because Twitter has a character limit. However, the teacher who has a blog shares a link that directs the reader to the blog. Most of the blog posts are about the pedagogical issues and classroom activities. At that point, digital literacy is blended with traditional literacy. To create an article that is about a classroom activity, the person who has a blog needs to use office tools on her/his computer, know how to embed the images into the text and post it on the blog. While those are the basic steps, further steps are keeping track of the readers/visitors, keeping hot topic posts statistics, keeping the blog vivid and up-to-date are other

sides of the story. Also, the articles are written in understandable language to address a wide range of readers; They are not written in the expert-level academic language. Hence, the blogger teacher is comprehensive both in the language skills, at least in writing, and the computing skills. The combination of these two creates new literacy practices in a blended way.

The other answer for the first research question is multimodal text features in the chat. Especially use of image and video is limited. When a member uses one of these multimodal text features, the multimodal texts are related to their personal life such as their pets' image, their children's video or personal travel photos. When they use an image/video which contains their students' existence, they take care not to reveal students' identities. In many schools, revealing students' photo or video without their parents' consent is against the rules. So, while a pre-service teacher is experiencing the new literacy practice in the chat they are learning the primary tenets of the profession as well. So, when participants are producing new literacy practice, they not only have to know how to embed the image/video to a tweet but also pay attention to the privacy of their students. Being in the public platform does not mean being entirely free.

One of the other important findings of the first questions is symbolic articulation. As it is defined in the coding part, hashtags and usernames of the participants can be used as a part of a sentence. For example, "Hey, #kinderchat! it's 10 pm here!" (CM-09/25/2017). In this tweet, CM used the group hashtag to address all of the people in the group instead of other proper addressing such as folks, everybody, mates, etc. I think this kind of use of hashtag and username is the second step of using these virtual items. The hashtag must be used in some part of the sentence to participate in the chat properly; otherwise, the tweet will not appear on the tweet stream. This is a primary rule of the group which is often repeated by moderators. Using @username is basically replying/mentioning in the Twitter terminology. Replacing the

@username with a part of a sentence is the further step of the new literacy practice because it means that the authors become comfortable enough on using @username to manipulate it as they want.

About symbolic writing, there is another side on Kinderchat. Emojis are common multimodal text features of the chat. In Figure 4 (emoji menu), the left side of the board has symbols about different items such as sports, animals, vehicles, etc. Replacing one of the emojis with a word is like wording with an image. For instance,



Figure 5: Symbolic writing.

From this point, emojis might seem the fun side of the story but if they are used in the prolific way, it becomes a marker of expertise in new literacy practices.

The chat is scaffolded in Q-A format which makes the flow of the academic part of the chat easy to follow and participate. One of the findings of the format of the chat is the necessity of producing questions for the article of the week. This part of requirements is the responsibility of moderators who are experienced members. Moderators share the link of the article in their

first tweets and welcome others. This requires digital literacy, making it a basic expectation. However, making a connection between the article and the real life of the people and posing the question from this blended way is integrating professional knowledge with Twitter knowledge. From this point, the questions of the chat might be prepared in advance. Although they were prepared in advance, managing the flow of the chat would be very hard. Since Twitter is an open microblogging platform, although I created a meeting room metaphor at the beginning, managing a group of people is not easy. It is observed that conversations around some sub-topic which is not related to the main topic or educational, might be off-topic during the chat. So, moderators have to gather the participants' attention again and again during the chat. That's why they are producing interesting, entertaining, and pinpointed questions that can be related both with the article and the school life of the participants. Thus, moderators produce new literacy practice by blending the academic knowledge with real-life incidents and this requires experience in the domain and on Twitter.

Another important answer for the first question is participants are producing new literacy practices by being short and understandable or as codes said by being concise. The character limit of Twitter forced the participants into being concise while they were stating their ideas or making comments about important academic issues. During the data collection of this study, Twitter conducted a test to character limit of tweets. As Table 1 shows that data collection began on September 25, 2017, when Twitter had a 140-character limit. This month was also the time when Twitter began the test. (<https://money.cnn.com/2017/11/07/technology/twitter-280-character-limit/>) Some of the Kinderchat members were chosen for the test group unintentionally. In these weeks' chats, this situation was discussed and questioned why some of us have 280-character limit while some others have 140? One of the participants (B) stated

himself several times that he was not able to express himself in the limited area. Although on November, after the test was finalized, everybody had the same doubled character limit, this incident in the chat showed that being concise is not only the requirements of Twitter but also an important feature of new literacy practices.



Figure 6: Character limit.

About the production process of New Literacy Practices in Kinderchat, ten elements of the coding table required more attention because the most outstanding features of new literacy practices were delivered through these ten elements at the first glance. I provide detailed information about the contributions of ten elements to this study.

Abbreviation, punctuation/symbol, short/half sentence, and capital letters are four frequently used elements during the chat. These four elements are used to make extra room for the ideas of participants as well as they served a purpose to be quick. I observed that during the chat, especially the academic part of it (middle 40 minutes) online interaction was very high. In a couple of seconds, the tweet timeline was fed by many tweets. So, participants had to be quick and keep pace with others. Keeping pace with others was important because on tweet stream tweets might be mixed up. Like a crowded talkative group of people, everybody was saying something, but nobody was talking about the same thing at the same time. To illustrate, as it was said before the first 10 minutes of the chat was for warming up and welcoming. Participants

introduced themselves and where they were from. Following 40 minutes was for academic discussion. If a participant introduced him/herself at 20th minute of the chat, this would be weird. Hence, being fast or in other words, keeping pace with others became important. In this group of elements, capital letters have a slightly different function because capital letters helped to stress the part of the sentence in which the author (the creator of the tweet) thinks it was important. In the described rush above, participants needed to be understood properly. They did not want to skip the important parts of their comments, though. Thus, they used capital letters to stress their valued ideas.



Figure 7: Abbreviation and others.

Example for abbreviation, punctuation and short sentence. KB did not use the subject (I), used “Dec.” for of “December” and used punctuation marks to reflect her feeling. : (to stand for emoji.

Made-up words and self-style writing are less common elements but related to each other. In time, the more members gain experience on Twitter and in the domain, the more they become more creative in new literacy practices. Although made-up words are not used many times, some members create a new word which is the composition of two half words, such as wautumn: winter + autumn (see Figure 8) or rotochick: rotisserie + chicken. (September 25, 2017. MK). Also, these products are results of the humorous and friendly atmosphere. When this kind of

attempts are approved by the others, they use and retweet this new word. This kind of production might be seen in the traditional literacy which is the common point of traditional and new literacy, I believe. However, since new literacy practices (at least KC in this case) has occurred in the virtual area, dissemination of this new practice is easier than the other. As a foreigner, I learned these made-up words from them otherwise there is no way to learn it for me.

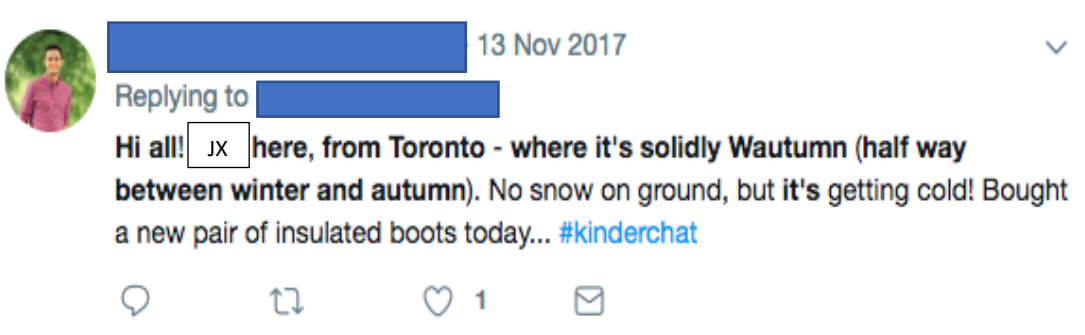


Figure 8: Made-up word.

Self-style writing is little different from the made-up word because it is related to using all the Twitter actions in his/her way. Some of the members, not many, developed a self-way of tweeting and participating. The more I become familiar with the data the more I am able to identify that whose tweet this is. I think, developing self-style tweeting takes time and requires much commitment both with the domain and Twitter. That's why made-up words are generally created by experienced members. Also, self-style writing might be seen an intersection of the real and virtual lives. As the Figure 9 depicts that these teachers were experienced kindergarten teachers and Twitter chatters, and, in some cases, they brought what they used or hear in the classroom to the Twitter chat.



Figure 9: Invented spelling.

The (Friendly/humorous) tone is another element in the participation elements for being concise that related to made-up words. In the tweets, especially the first and the last 10 minutes of the chat, members use a friendly, informer, warm and tolerant tone to each other. I think this is the important element for the continuity of the chat because if people feel that they are talking with their superior this might cause tension. However, in Kinderchat, principals, ordinary teachers, aspiring teachers, pre-service teachers, retired ones, and many others who are related to education is having a conversation in this atmosphere. Although the dominant metaphor is a

teacher meeting room for Kinderchat, the conversations did not take place in a formal atmosphere.

One of the elements of being concise was idioms which were the common point both in traditional and new literacy practices, I believe. Understanding idioms requires a close relationship with the dominant culture. As a foreigner, I had some hard times to understand the idioms that were used in the chats although there were not many. Because idioms convey a huge amount of a valuable background from the culture, they mean more than one thing in the general composition of a conversation. This point is applicable for new and old literacy aspects. However, I want to underline another side of the study which is related to ethos. As it is explained in the theory part, new literacy practices are coming from an entirely different mindset when they are compared to traditional ones. But idioms as the conveyors of the culture can save a place in the new aspect which is a very good point for the teachers for the continuity of the literacy practices.

Symbolic writing and using other group's hashtag are another point at that point. What symbolic writing means was explained in the previous chapter. Using some other education-related hashtags is another code for being concise. Although it seemed that participants used these two elements for being concise, I interpreted these two elements from a different point because of some tweets. However, I need to underline an important point here that hashtags and @username format of using provided findings for both of the research questions. From the point of the first question, those are kind of texts that were created with the New Literacy Practices aspect. Using the hashtag or a person's username (@username) was defined as symbolic writing in this study. Also, this kind of feature is a signal of further level new literacy competency because hashtags or usernames at the beginning or the end of the sentence is the first step which

should be learned. Using them as a part of a sentence should be considered a further step at New Literacy Practices.



Figure 10: Symbolic writing.

When participants in Kinderchat mention about the person who is neither ordinary attendee of chats nor interlocutor of the conversation, the participants who do not know that person and his/her studies will learn. This creates an interaction as well as connectivity with a wider educational network which is desirable for teachers. The similar situation is applicable to other group hashtags. When a participant used another group's hashtag, the others who do not know about this group will learn it. However, there is another small point under this hashtag topic. As it is known hashtags need to be short, descriptive and neat words of choice that have embedded hyperlinks to direct the reader to another data source. When a reader clicks it, s/he will see the people who used this hashtag. So, as a kind of text feature hashtags should be short and concise. <https://www.socialpilot.co/blog/how-to-use-hashtags-effectively-in-social-media-marketing> However, this does not mean that there are no long hashtags. An example below showed that participants used long hashtags. Then why? From the fact that hashtags have hyperlinks to direct the reader to the group of tweets in which that hashtag was used, it can be expected that long hashtags are not be used so often like short ones. So, participants might want

to be understood by only the people who are familiar with the topic. Their messages do not have to address all public. They might want to be a little private. Thus, ironically long hashtags, which are sometimes a joke and not a real hashtag, have two functions. The first one is providing small circle connectivity, which will be explained in detail in the new question findings, while the second one is creating a sub-genre as a new literacy text feature.

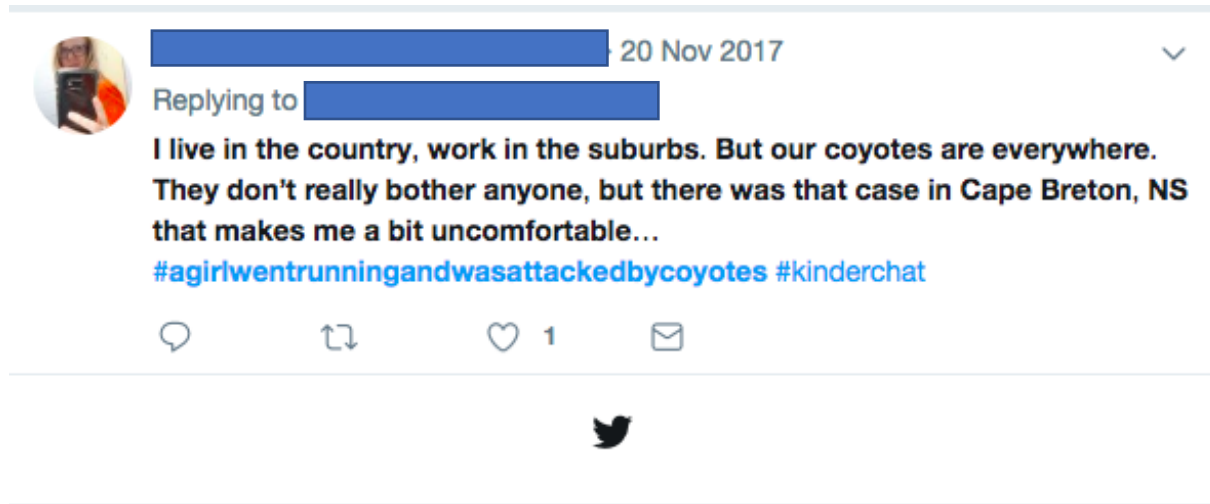


Figure 11: Hashtag

Research Question 2: How do participants use New Literacy Practices to participate in Kinderchat?

The first answer that comes to mind is actually the sum of the answers to the first question because those products are the way to participate in the chat. However, the second research question asks functions of those products that were produced during the chat. To reach an in-depth understanding, I asked the “How are these NLP products used by participants?” and “For what purpose?” sub-questions. The answers I get are stated below.

Participants on Kinderchat use the New Literacy Practice productions to be connected to a wider network. Actually, the main purpose of the microblogging in the educational areas is the same thing; however, Kinderchat specified tweeting activity by organizing topic-specific

conversations every week. Rather than this point, participants want to be a part of a wider professional community as well as provide a gate for those who have not have access to this community yet. That's why newcomers, either pre-service or in-service teachers, are important in this study. Since I did not have any personal connection with the participants, I cannot exactly say what they learned from Kinderchat conversations. But, I observed that especially pre-service teachers are interested in the chat closely. Because microblogging on teaching is getting importance, college courses designed to include education-related social networks like Kinderchat. If it is considered that I met this group thanks to the class I registered, the importance can be understood.

Along with this opportunity, Kinderchat served to pre-service teachers, some elements that were used in the creation of tweets, in other words, production of new literacy practice, provide access to a wider network. Links, one of the Multimodal Design elements, is the most important provider at that point. As it is defined in the coding part, links were basically used to announce the topic of the week and spread the article about it. Because links direct the reader to another source, it helped both to see new sides of the network and being concise. When the reader clicks on the link, s/he can see the other source. Also, the author who used the link express the main message concisely because of the Twitter character limit. The 280-character limit is not enough to tell everything that can be told by an article. So, links are the best new literacy practices which allow participants for easy contribution and effective tweeting.

Another important element that provides connectivity is hashtags. Other than group hashtag (#Kinderchat), participants used many other hashtags. Some of them were other educational groups while some of them were not educational hashtags. As it can be seen in this example.



Figure 12: Other hashtags.

Hashtags served an important role to answer the first question. Being concise which is crucial new literacy property, can be provided by using hashtags because hashtags bring the people who have talked about that specific topic before. Instead of “he said, she said, ...” using one-word hashtag is enough. As it is said above, the first function of these long hashtags was creating a small-circle group. These hashtags were used to create a small sub-group which includes the people who understand the message. When I return the metaphor of teacher meeting room; a couple of people were having another conversation with each other during the meeting.

Another connectivity method is using usernames of the people who have an impact on the domain or are the theorists. Although the mentioned people may not be an ordinary participant of chats, in this way both they are notified of the chat and other people who do not know them will be informed. Figure 13 explains in detail.



Figure 13: Mention of an author who is not participating in the chat.

FM thought that the person she mentioned in her tweet is very important in the domain and she was inspired by her. This person never showed up in chats and her Twitter account says she is a professor on Early Childhood Education. As the author of the tweet said, her pedagogical approaches were effective. Moreover, the author said that she learned “loose parts” from that person and Kinderchat “PLN” (Professional Learning Network). This abbreviation underlines the feeling connected side of the usernames and hashtags.

Besides the username tactic, recruiting newcomers to get followers was a professional tactic toward widen the network, I think. As it is known, if you do not follow a person on Twitter, you cannot see his/her tweets. In the chat October 25, 2017, one of the experienced members and founders of Kinderchat web-page HE tweeted and advised the others to follow the moderator of the week. If it is considered that every week had a different moderator, this meant that both moderators and newcomers would have new people in their followers/following list.

The other side of being connected was getting help and being in the solidarity. The example below was the proof of asking for help.



Figure 14: Asking for help.

From this point, knowing that you are a part of a bigger community, although it was virtual, is a support in this case. Exchange of ideas, different pedagogical approaches, different interpretations of common points, and a variety of classroom settings were the opportunities to be a well-equipped teacher in today's education platform. Although most of the participants were from Canada and different states of the US, there was enough diversity because of the multicultural texture of these two countries.

Another finding is that the participants shared valuable experiences and information from their personal background, using some multimodal items, such as videos, images or gifs. Besides academic sharing, their personal sharing during warming up and closing up periods of chats were a sign of the friendly atmosphere. For instance, in the chat on October 16, 2017, MK shared his son's photo in his first Halloween costume. There were many mention/replies and interactions around this photo and all of them were positive comments. It showed that participants felt comfortable enough to share this kind of private photo during the chat. Although this kind of open sharing was obvious in Kinderchat conversations, I never observed inappropriate tweets or severe argument during the chats. I think the professional attitude of the participants created a friendly, humorous and welcoming atmosphere.

There is one thing to underline at this point. After the end of the coding process, I created a table that shows the moderators and newcomers week by week. When I looked their tweet sets, I realized that none of the newcomers used multimodal items in their tweets. I think this was not because they did not know how to use multimodal items; instead, they might not want to share. On the other hand, all the participants who shared the personal images were all experienced members of Kinderchat. Hence, I think this one was also not related knowing how to use multimodal items. Although Kinderchat had a friendly and warm atmosphere, it took time to feel that much comfort to share personal images or videos. Moreover, tweet statistics showed that when there was no academic conversation, such as October 23, 2017, there was no newcomer in the chat. This showed that newcomers most of whom were pre-service teachers were interested in the chat for the academic purposes. Being friends takes much time through online networks and 9 weeks was not enough to find this in the scope of this study.

Another important finding for this research question came from the relationship between moderators and newcomers. I analyzed this relationship under online genres set of code since these two roles were the only one that was identifiable from tweets. The relationship between these two roles was the explicit proof for how participants were using new literacy practice to participate in the chats.

Before beginning the detailed findings, I want to unpack the roles of moderators. Moderators find the article of the week, share this article in the tweet, call and welcome people to the chat, pose questions during the chat, manage the time and the flow of the chat to not being out of topic, encourage members to participate in the chat. So, according to my metaphor of teacher meeting room, moderators were the teachers. Simply, the relationship between moderators and newcomers was mentor-mentee/ teacher-student kind relationship. However,

providing help or answer was not only the moderator's task, other experienced participants who were not the moderator that night helped as well. So, it was not exactly an advising, asking-answering kind of relationship but very similar one.

After the online genre set of codes emerged, I discover the use of these genres. To do this, I asked, "What online genre is used by a moderator/newcomer?" and "For what purpose participants use these genres?" sub-questions. Before detailed answer, I need to clarify that none of the genres was specified to a specific role. I mean, there was no such thing that retweets can be used only by moderators. However, because of the roles, participants had intention to use some kind of genres more than others.

For example, moderators frequently preferred retweet with a comment or simply tweeted the group hashtag to remind newcomers.



Figure 15: Hashtag reminder.

Also, they used tweets to simply pose the question which would instruct the chat. As a response, participants created tweets to answer these questions. However, during this tweet stream, people gathered around to the sub-topics which were related to the main topic and mention/reply genre emerged here. In the example below, CM tweeted about a theorist that affected her teaching philosophy in the chat. After this tweet, she might have thought that not

everybody knows the theorist and tweeted again to explain the main understanding of this theorist. Under this tweet, mention/reply thread is a good example for the sub-topic interaction.

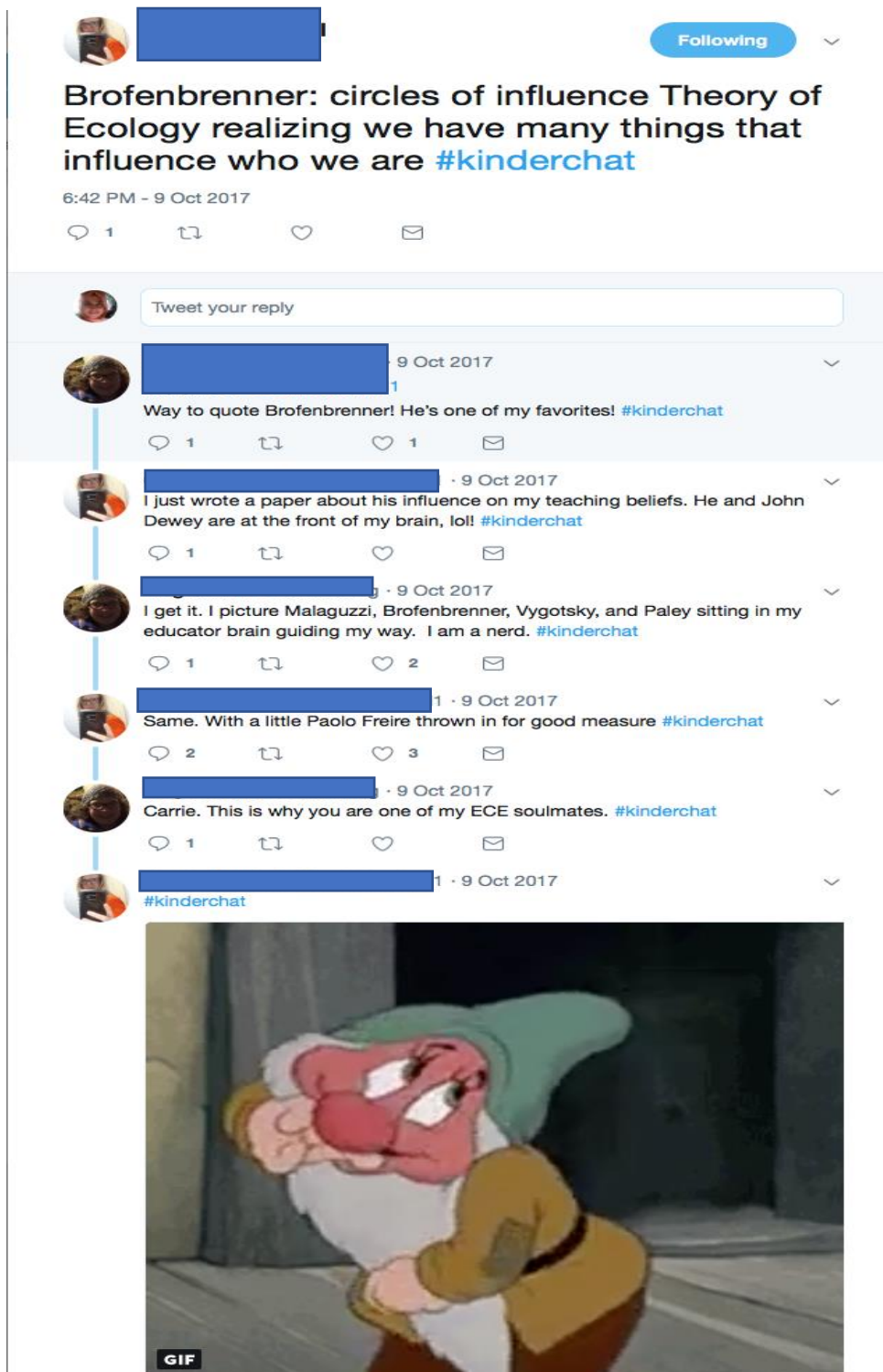


Figure 16: Mention/reply thread.

Moderators used retweets or retweet with comments to encourage the members to participate. When a moderator or an experienced member retweeted a newcomer's tweet, it was hard to decide if retweeting was used for encouraging. There was no way to learn this attempt because of the lack of personal contact. However, retweets with comments obviously depicted the intention of the author, moderator/experienced in this case. Examples would explain for what purpose a retweet with comments were used.

In these two examples below, the moderator MS tried to provoke the conversation and encourage the newcomers to participate in the chat by using the retweet with comment genre. This intention might not be seen from these two screenshots but overall in the chat, the intention of the moderator was obvious.



Figure 17a: Provoking a newcomer.



Figure 17 b: Provoking newcomer.

Another good use of retweets with a comment is being collaborative during the chat. The example depicts that the interaction between two experienced teachers and chatters (CM and KL). Actually, the situation emerged here served two purposes. The first one is that the moderator forgot to use #kinderchat when she posed the question. The other one retweeted her tweet with just writing “Q1 #kinderchat”. This incident might not have happened intentionally but work both to remind the tag and grab the attention of others. Moreover, after one second CL retweeted and reminded both the question and the hashtag, one of the novice teachers (aspiring teacher) B reminded the hashtag by retweeting the question tweet with #kinderchat. Although I did not insert this example here, to save a little space, it showed the attention of the chatters. B might not be even a teacher or in a college, but he was an experienced chatter and participated in the chats regularly.

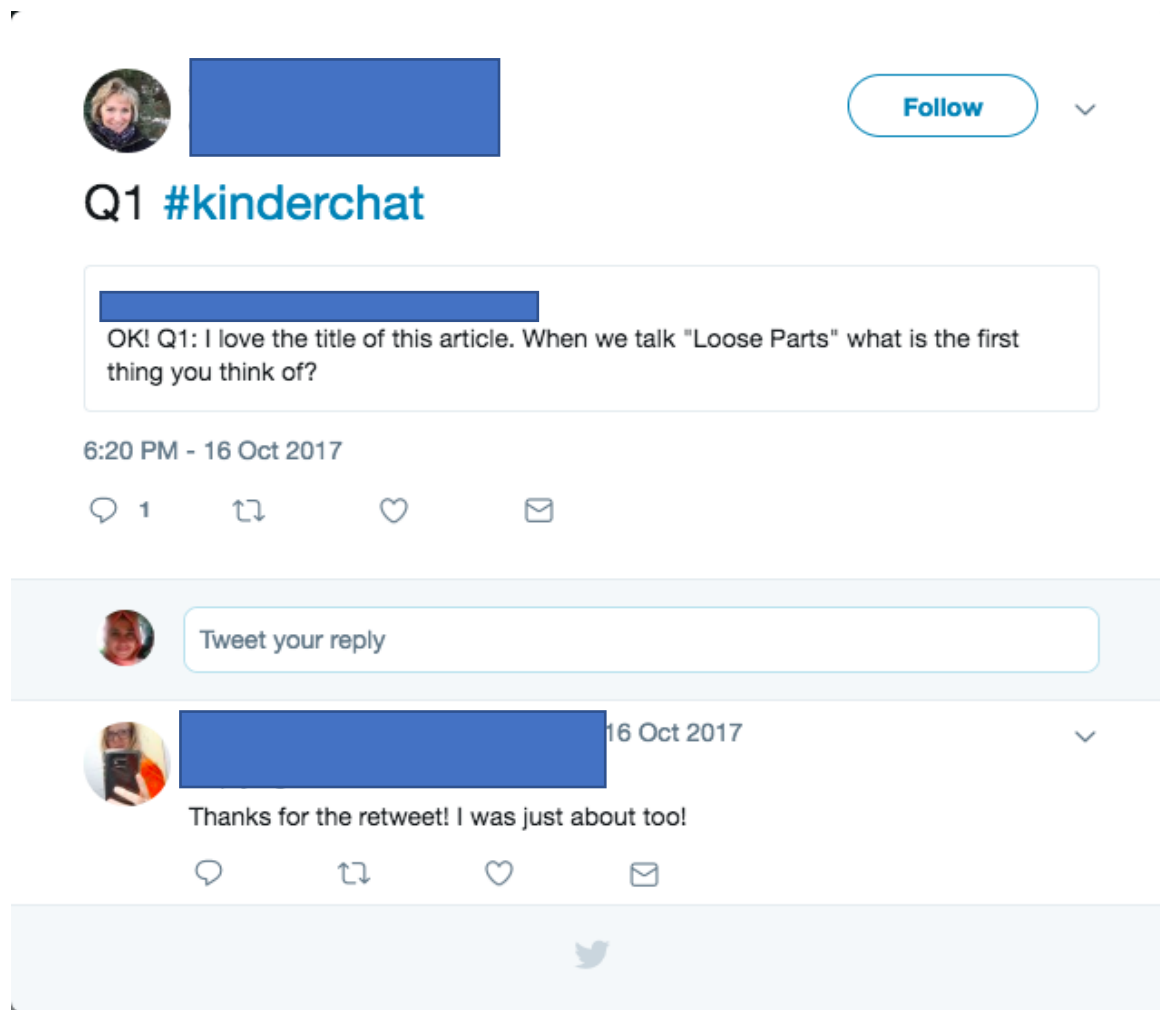


Figure 18: Collaborative working.

Another use example is for retweet with a comment was adding comments to a tweet that was created by others. This kind of use of this genre also depicted the just-in-time design of Twitter. There were only 2 minutes between the main tweet and retweet with a comment. This time gap might have showed the attention of the participants, both were experienced teachers and chatters, but also showed the just-in-time interaction of the chat.

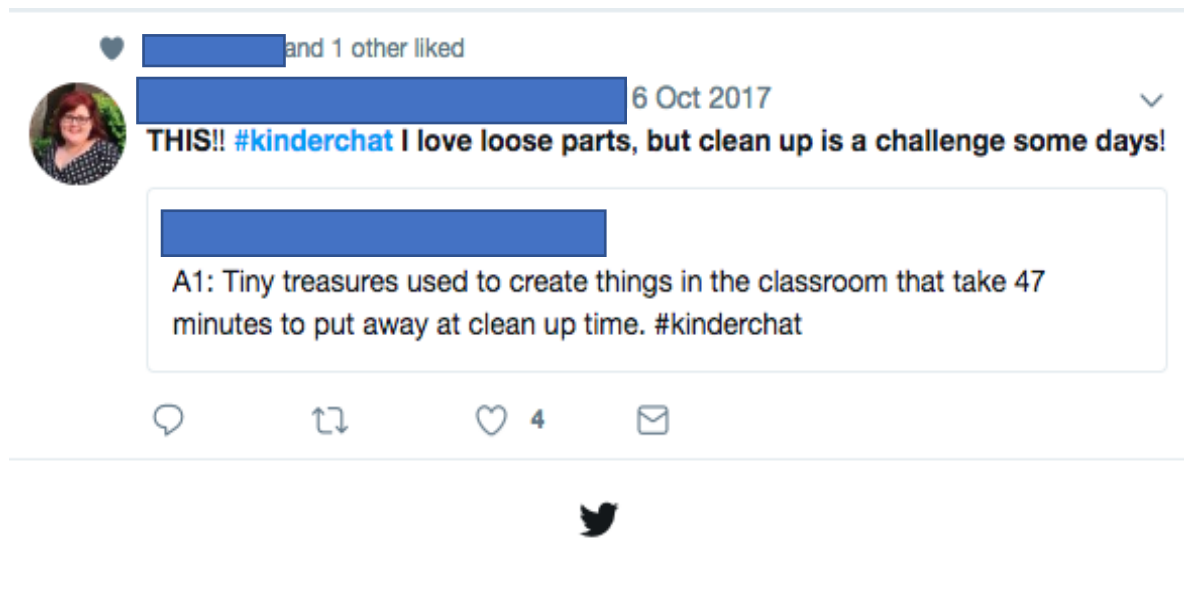


Figure 19a: Retweet with a comment.

Participants were not using retweet with a comment genre to add comments to other people's tweets, they used it to add something to their own tweet. In this example, although CM was very good at expressing herself in a concise way, she used retweet with comment. She might have forgotten it, but the only sure thing was she wanted to have an integrated statement about the message. In this example, the reader cannot see the names of the participant because I covered the named to protect their identity. But these two tweets belong to the same person.



Figure 19b: Retweet with a comment.

Retweet with a comment genre was used to answer the sub-questions in several times which again depicted the just-in-time design of Twitter. In the example below, the moderator (MS) asked a sub-question that was bonded to the main question during the chat. She was trying to collect more ideas about family rights in the school context. However, I used this example to mention another point in it. B, who is the author of retweet with a comment would be able to answer the question with just a plain tweet, but he chose to use retweet with a comment.



Figure 19c: Retweet with a comment.

Another use of retweet with a comment is agreeing with the others. If one person agrees with the another, s/he might use retweet with comment by saying this.



Figure 19d: Retweet with a comment.

There was another interesting use of retweet with a comment genre. Although being concise was very important both for the new literacy practices and Twitter use, in some cases participants did not have to be concise because no need to be. These two examples depict the point.



Figure 19e: Retweet with a comment.

B did not have left many things to say at this point. Although New Literacy products on Twitter provided opportunities to explain participants' ideas in various ways, some points cannot be stated with these products. This was one of them.

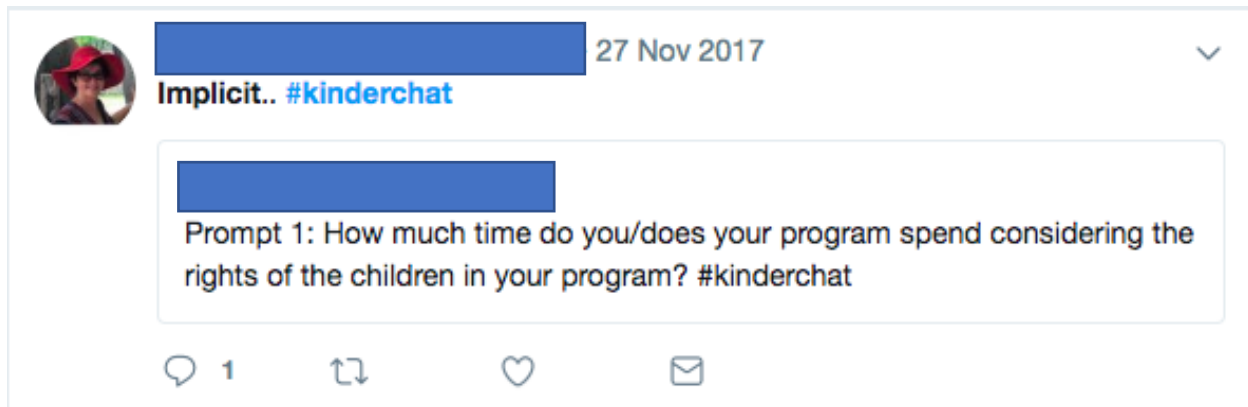


Figure 19f: Retweet with a comment.

F would have used more words, but she might have thought that one word which explains many things was enough.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Further Implications

According to the analysis of the data and findings, Kinderchat can be considered as a virtual place in which to teach, learn and practice new literacies collaboratively. As the group is regularly chatting on every Monday, and some of the participants become pioneers of the chats, this study supports the idea that Twitter has its literacy aspect and can serve as a new literacy practice platform. (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012). Along with the findings that answer the research questions in this study, the following points should be mentioned.

The first point is that two Twitter tools, hashtag and @username, help answer both research questions. As discussed in the findings chapter, participants used them to participate in the chat, related to the second question, and as a production of new literacy practices, which related to first question. Hashtags as productions, or organized conversations (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012) provide connectivity and conciseness in the limited space of character. Usage of @username as a mention/reply in Twitter, or “recognition” in Greenhow and Gleason’s (2012) terminology, as production supports one-on-one interaction through accessing the text features of

new literacy. From that point, the implications of Kist et al.'s notion of scaffolded conversation (2015) are seen on Kinderchat.


Also, hashtag and @username provide connectivity to a wider network, which is the major benefit of using Twitter as an educational tool. (Evans, 2015 and Greenhalg & Koehler, 2017). When these two items are examined closely, it can be seen that hashtags provide access to a wide community, or “affinity space” (Greenhalg & Koehler, 2017) while @username addresses a small and intimate circle. However, in the case of Kinderchat, participants are required to use #kinderchat in their tweets in order to participate in the chat. Because as a researcher I am observing this usage, @username becomes a more interactive tool in this study. In usual circumstances, when @username is used, other participants cannot see the tweet. But when this mention/reply tweet has an #kinderchat, everybody can see it in the chat. Hence, in the case of Kinderchat, all participants are necessarily intertwined in the situation, and connectivity is created automatically. Also, as Reinhardt et al. (2010) stated, the social ties that would be weaker in the real life might become stronger by means of off-topic Twitter chats. (p. 329). However, I do not think this situation intentionally occurred among participants during chats, because, as the Kinderchat web-page and main Twitter account state as their motto, the only concern is to talk about educational issues.

The embeddedness of new literacy practices (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014) might make them invisible at first glance. However, the huge amount of interest shown by the scholars and pre-service teachers, along with the studies confirming this interest in other settings, showed that, although microblogging activities may seem unrelated to the educational domain, the embeddedness of new literacy practices can be understood when users are engaged. Such online engagement is endorsed by the new literacy studies and often used on professional development

of teachers. Pre-service teachers are sometimes assigned to join this group. To explore this point, one of the moderators and the founders of Kinderchat, MN, asked the pre-service teachers if they were assigned to a chat in one of their courses. Although, the tweet was created on October 1, 2018, outside the time frame of this study, the reply/mention thread under this tweet showed that several pre-service teachers were assigned to a chat as a part of their course assignment.

Perhaps more importantly, another aspect of participating in virtual platforms is the opportunity to be a part of an extensive community. I observed two primary motivations to participate. The first is the need to keep learning and updating oneself because the domain knowledge has been growing day by day stimulated by evolving technology. (Grosbeck & Bran, 2016 and Lammers et al., 2012). Thus, it can be understood why experienced teachers have been participating in the chat on the first night of the week when they are probably very tired. The other motivation is the sense of belonging to a community in which people care about each other's problems professionally. Those problems are generally education related rather than private and personal, and novice or pre-service teachers especially need support when they are concerned about something. This point is supported by studies that found that pre-service teachers might feel more supported and motivated by being a part of a bigger community. (Reinhardt, et al. 2010).

Another point I want to mention is that Twitter changed the character limit per tweet. As it is mentioned in the findings chapter, in September 2017, Twitter conducted a test on randomly selected Twitter users who fortunately, included two of the participants (FM and JS) in Kinderchat. For two weeks, they had a 280-character limit while others had 140. This situation was questioned in the chat in these weeks. To clarify my point, when a person used the whole 140-character allowance, the tweet would be a half of page or more. Also, being concise is








Following

I know this isn't on-topic, but can I just say - being able to use 280 characters on Twitter is LIFE-CHANGING?!?! #kinderchat #fillingextraspacewiththis!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
!!

6:49 PM - 13 Nov 2017

17 Likes



 17

Knobel & Lankshear (2014) stated that new literacy practices’ “research findings are rarely final and conclusive” (p. 100). Given this fact, further efforts in the research area are required, because of either gaps in the field or limitations of previous studies, including the data collection and writing process of the present study. An example of a gap in the field is the question of the effects of changing Twitter’s character limit, as no studies have been conducted

since the limit was changed from 140 to 280. The effects of the change of character limits and its effect on participants' writing might be a topic to focus on.

As said in the methodology chapter, the greatest limitation of this study was lack of personal contact with the participants. In a study in which I had personal contact with the participants who were both experienced teachers and chatters, I would be able to learn about their personal new literacy experiences. For example, one of the experienced teachers taught French in an immersive classroom in a Canadian school (MK), who was very good at participating and at moderating the chat. Some interesting questions might be how she instructs classes from the perspective of new literacy practices, what personal experiences she might relate, and she became adept in new literacy practices. By focusing on the experienced teachers and chatters, we can explore how experienced teachers combine the old and new literacy practices and how new literacy practices shape their professional thinking.

Another suggestion might be to focus on articles given at the beginning of the chats and the lexicon that was used during discussion of them. NVivo provides cluster analysis, which refers to maps of the words that were used by the participants and their percentage of an interaction. This statistical data can be used to understand the nature of reading and writing interactions within the limited time and space on Twitter.

This point might be relevant to Knobel & Wilber's (2009) notion of "ethos". As they stated briefly, new literacy practices reflect a different world-view from traditional practices. Thus, the authors of new literacy practice productions might have different point of view toward the value of conciseness and the constraints of character limitations. Also, the authors look differently to being quick. In today's generation, giving a late response to a text message or a

tweet might be rudeness while dealing with a mobile phone during a live conversation is rude for some others. Thus, ethos of new literacies is different from traditional literacies, can be said.

To return to the metaphor I used at the beginning, participants are in the teacher's meeting room, and every textual interaction can be interpreted as a live interaction. Combined with the general understanding of Twitteracy (Greenhow & Gleason, 2009), online genres, which are retweet, mention/reply and retweet with comment are a different sort of texts which participants used to participate in the chat, so they provided access to this community. However, the point here is that there are no clear-cut borders defining their uses. Especially, the retweet with comment genre is used for several purposes such as agreeing/disagreeing, adding comments, answering questions, interacting on short notice, or reminding someone to use the hashtag. If the purpose is answering a question, this can be done by replying to the person who asked the question. If the purpose is to immediately agree, this also can be done with the reply/mention genre. Then why do participants prefer retweet with comment instead of reply/mention? Unfortunately, this question cannot be answered within the scope of this study because I do not have any personal contact with the participants.

However, this question, although impossible to answer, implies the fact that new literacy practices are fluid and shaping our lives while being shaped by them. We can see new literacies in every corner of our lives. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). There are no rules for using these genres in a Twitter chat. Anybody can use any genre to convey his/her message. Participants will decide which one is convenient for their purpose. They might create their own literacy practices as they did in the Kinderchat with made-up words or invented writing. As Grosseck & Bran (2016) said, the new literacy practices result from our lives, interactions and development. The more people engage in the online culture and platforms, the more they become accustomed to

their conditions or limitations. These examples support the point that these participants somehow became used to the Twitter language and began to use, create, and embrace it.

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RESUME

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- Member of Trekking Club in Turkey
- Member of Turkish Student Association at The University of Alabama
- Member of Turkish Student Association at IU.

Personal Traits

Leadership skills, successful at planning and organization, team player, self-disciplined & determined, responsible, willing to take initiative, eager to learn new things, versatile.